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AN HUMBLE ATTEMPT TO REPAIR THE
CHRISTIAN TEMPLE.

A
S E R M O N,

SHEWING

The business of officers and private members in the church
of *Christ*, and how their work should be performed; with
some motives to excite professors ardently to engage in it.

Preached in the CITY of
P H I L A D E L P H I A,

October 21st, 1783,

AT THE OPENING OF THE
A S S O C I A T I O N,

And published at their REQUEST.

By OLIVER HART, A. M.

*And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles
and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief
corner stone.*

*In whom all the building fitly framed together, grow-
eth unto an holy Temple in the Lord. Eph. ii. 20, 21.*

P H I L A D E L P H I A:

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HAGGAI ii. 4.

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD, and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech the high priest, and be strong all the people of the land, saith the LORD, and work : for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts.

MEN, Brethren and Fathers :

BEING called to address the body of our associated churches, now convened by their delegates, I could wish to do it in a way both pleasing and profitable. My design in order to effect this, will easily be discerned from the text just read, as the foundation of our discourse.

It will readily be granted, that lukewarmness and indifferency in religion, is injurious to the best cause in the world---contrary to the spirit of christianity, and highly provoking to the King of saints, who complained of a declension in the church of Ephesus, *I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love (a), and severely threatened the Laodicean church. So then because thou art lukewarm, and nei-*

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(a) Rev. ii. 4.

ther cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth (b). Only two of the seven churches of Asia escaped rebuke. And are not some of our churches equally reprehensible? Have not most of them lost their first love? Are not ministers and people become too remiss? Alas! where is our flaming love, burning zeal and assiduity in religion?---Fled? And irretrievable? We hope not! The gospel means of a revival are still in our hands. Let us then rouse from our lethargy---gird on our strength, and work vigorously in repairing the Christian Temple; which through sloth and negligence is too much gone to decay.

That I may contribute all in my power towards helping forward this good work, I shall borrow assistance from the words first read.

Yet now be strong, O *Zerubbabel*, saith the LORD, and be strong, O *Josbua*, son of *Josedech* the high priest, and be strong all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts.

We have here the most salutary and encouraging advice given, by the Lord, to the rebuilders of his ancient temple. The persons addressed were, first, Zerubbabel, who was a prince---of the seed royal---greatly in
favor

favor with Darius king of Babylon, who, according to Josephus, advanced him to the first place of honor, next to his own person, and adopted him into his affinity and blood (c). And by him was made deputy governor over the Jews, now returned from their seventy years captivity, to their own land. But notwithstanding his high birth, rank and office, he was not above doing the Lord's work; for he was his servant, and commanded to labor in building the temple.

Next to him, Joshua was addressed. He was of the sacerdotal line---an high priest. But his ecclesiastical dignity did not raise him above taking a part in building the temple of the Lord. "Be strong, O Joshua, and work." It might be well if some dignitaries in the church were duly to consider this.

The remnant of the people were also addressed, even all the people of the land. None, of whatever character, station or profession were exempted. All were to labor in building the temple. "Be strong all ye people of the land, and work."

The immediate occasion of this injunction was the discouragements thrown in the way of the builders; not only from outward enemies, but from many of their ancient fathers; who, instead of encouraging the

A 3

work,

(c) Jewish Antiq. b. 31. ch. 4.

work, as they ought to have done, wept aloud, because they saw the present temple likely to prove so far inferior to the former, even as nothing in comparison of it. Thus they discouraged the people and retarded the work. It is no new or uncommon thing, for the people of God to meet with difficulties and obstructions in the Lord's work; and sometimes, as here, from unexpected quarters.

But, that the people might be enabled to face every difficulty, and go on with the building, the Lord encouraged them by a gracious promise of his presence. "Work: for I am with you." And the injunction is enforced by divine authority, having the sanction of a "Saith the Lord," no less than three times annexed to it.

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, *Saith the Lord*, and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedeck the high priest, and be strong all ye people of the land, *Saith the Lord*, and work: for I am with you, *Saith the Lord* of hosts.

And now, that I may apply the text to the state of our churches, give me leave to observe, that the Jewish temple was typical of the christian church. This might be made apparent, by a great variety of particulars, which I shall pass over, and only take notice, that as all the Jews were employed

played in building the temple, even so should christians of all ranks and characters, labor in building up the church of Jesus Christ. Every one has a work to do; none should be idle.

In treating this subject, I shall endeavour as God may assist,

I. To point out the work belonging to the several ranks and orders of men, in the christian church.

II. Shew how this work ought to be performed.

III. Offer some considerations to excite professors to engage with ardor in it.

I. I am to point out the work belonging to the several ranks and orders of men in the christian church.

The church of Christ is a body, consisting of many members; and although they *have not all the same office*, they are all necessary and useful in their places. *The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you.* There are, it is true, *diversities of gifts*, whereby some are qualified for greater usefulness than others; *but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal (d).* None so insignificant, as not to be able to place a pin in the Lord's

table.

(1) Rom 12 1 Cor 12.

tabernacle. The grand point is for each one to know his duty, and attend to his own proper work. What that is, I am now about to shew, and shall

FIRST, Begin with the civil magistrate. Some of this character there are in gospel churches. Would to God their number were increased. Civil, or even military office, is by no means incompatible with true piety and church-membership. It is therefore weakness in the extreme to exclude professors from acting, either in the government or defence of their country. Of all men, they are the most likely to succeed and prove a blessing. But no office should interfere with the duties of religion. Rulers, supreme and subordinate, have a work to do, in and for the church. And pious rulers have always attended to it, as their main concern. Good king David was an eminent instance of this. Notwithstanding the government of a large kingdom demanded his daily attention, and much of his time was taken up in the many wars he was engaged in, *it was in his heart, to build an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel (c.)* And for which he made immense preparations. *Now behold, saith he, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand*

sand thousand talents of silver; and of brass, and iron, without weight (f.) Well might he say, I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God (g.) Yea, so engaged was he in this work, that he could say, I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eye-lids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob (h.)

The wise and munificent king Solomon, not only succeeded his pious father in the regal government, but completed his design, in building the temple of the Lord. Much of his time and substance he devoted to that service. And the chief fathers, princes, captains and rulers of Israel, contributed largely, of their substance, towards building and endowing the temple (i).

Neither have christian princes thought it beneath them to be "nursing fathers" to the church of Jesus Christ. Witness Constantine the Great; who exceeded in erecting, endowing and decorating superb edifices for the worship of Christ.

Thus it appears that pious rulers have always been exemplary in encouraging religion and serving the church. Happy should we be, if all our magistrates were of this character!

But

(f) 1 Chron. xxii. 14. (g) 1 Chron. xxix. 2.
(h) Psal. cxxxii. 4. 5. (i) 1 Chron. xxix. 6, 7, 8.

But it should ever be remembered that magistrates, whether supreme or subordinate, have no power in, or over the church, in virtue of civil office.

1. They have no authority to enact laws to bind the consciences of men. This is the peculiar and unalienable prerogative of the great Head of the church. To assume such a power, is to intrude into the province of Christ, and arrogance in the highest degree. Christ is the sole Lord of conscience, and it is bound only by his laws. Proud man may arrogate the title of Head of the church, or vicar of Christ, and then lord it over God's heritage; but the King of saints acknowledges no such coadjutors or competitors.

2. They have no coercive power to compel men to be of this, that, or the other religion; or to worship God in any way, contrary to their own free and voluntary consent. The Lord never invested magistrates with any such authority. To assume it, tends to persecution, as experience has ever evinced. In vain may any plead, that they are of the true religion, and therefore it is but an act of kindness to compel men to worship as they do. Jews, Turks and Heathens may avail themselves of such a plea, as justly as christians. Every man may judge for himself what is, and what is not the true religion; but none can determine for others,
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in this case. To attempt it, is to invade the natural rights of mankind. It would therefore follow that none should be compelled to worship God in a way that they do not choose.

3. Neither have magistrates any right to impose taxes on church members, or any others, for the support of religion. The expences of a christian church, are to be defrayed by a free and voluntary contribution. The bible points out no other mode. And to impose taxes for this purpose, is to take the subjects money without their consent; which is no better than robbery, under the covert of law. Robbery, too---O horrid! for the support of religion. And will the Almighty be well pleased with an offering made of this "accursed thing." Hear what he says, *I, the Lord, love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering* (k).

It may now be queried, "What is the work of civil magistrates in or respecting the church?" I answer

1. To protect and defend it. This, church members have a right to expect and demand, in common, with all other citizens of the state. And more than this, magistrates cannot do for the church, by virtue of their office. In all matters, purely ecclesiastical, they are weak as other men, having only a single vote.

(k) Isaiah lxi. 8.

2. They

2. They should attend to the service of the church, the word and ordinances administered therein; not only for their own comfort and edification, but as an example to others. Being men of an elevated rank, their behaviour has a considerable influence on the conduct of the common people.

3. Magistrates ought to contribute cheerfully and liberally towards defraying the expences of the church. In this they should likewise be exemplary. Generally they are more wealthy than other men; and, being rulers and leaders, more may reasonably be expected from them than from others. The liberal contributions of the princes and rulers of Israel, is a pattern worthy the imitation of all in authority. But we fear some have been more ready to tax others, than to contribute themselves.

4. They ought to pay a suitable regard to the ministers of the church. Some unworthy characters, on being raised to office, have treated the servants of the Lord with contempt; whereas they ought rather to revere them as the "ambassadors of Christ;" *And to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake* (1). Instead of making them the objects of their scorn and ridicule, they should protect them from contumely and defend them from insult. I pass on

SECONDLY,

(1) 1 Thef. v. 13.

SECONDLY, to take notice of the work which church officers have to do, towards building up the christian temple. But here it may be queried, what officers are there in a gospel church? I answer, ministers, or bishops and deacons, and they only (1). As to the multiplicity of officers in some churches, such as arch-bishops, diocesean-bishops, deans, sub-deans, parsons, vicars and so on, by whomsoever introduced, they seem not to have been appointed by the great Head of the church; the scripture being silent respecting them.

In the primitive age of christianity, there were apostles, prophets and evangelists; but these, being extraordinary officers, ceased. And as to lay-elders in the church, commonly called ruling elders, there seems but little, rather no foundation in the word of God for them. With regard to their business, the scripture is silent. And to speak of an officer without an office, is a grand solecism. Besides, it is a reflection on the wisdom of Christ, to suppose he would appoint an officer in his church, and afford him no instructions relative to his duty.

Ministers, or bishops and deacons being then, in my humble opinion, the only officers

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(1) Phil. i. 1.

in a gospel church, I proceed to point out the work they have to do therein.

With respect to ministers--They are "laborers," emphatically so called. Yea, they are *workers together with Christ* (m). Engaged in the same glorious cause, so promote the same important interest. And their work may be reduced to the following branches.

1. Preaching the gospel. This branch of their work is pointed out in the commission, Mark 16. xv. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* This is a principal part of their work, and should be attended to with the greatest assiduity. *Preach the word*, saith Paul to Timothy, *be instant in season, and out of season* (n). The Greek word translated gospel, signifies good news, or glad tidings. Such indeed is the gospel, as it brings tidings of peace with God, and the news of salvation for lapsed, guilty man; through Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant.

Preaching this gospel will lead to an explanation of what the apostle calls *the form of sound words* (o). Which may include the following sublime and important doctrines, viz. the being of a God---A trinity of persons in the Godhead---The fall of Adam, and

(m) 2 Cor. vi. 1. (n) 2 Tim iv. 2. (o) 2 Tim. i. 13.

and the imputation of his sin to his posterity---The corruption of human nature, and impotence of men to that which is spiritually, or morally good---The everlasting love of God to his people---The eternal election of a definite number of the human race to grace and glory---The covenant of grace---Particular redemption- -Justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ---Pardon and reconciliation by his blood---Regeneration and sanctification by the influences and operations of the holy Spirit---The final perseverance of the saints in grace---The resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. This is an epitome of *the faith which was once delivered to the saints*, which ministers are to preach, and for which they should *earnestly contend* (p.) The tenor of this compendium evidently proves, that salvation is not of works, but of grace. And these doctrines are to be preached faithfully, without fear of offending man, clearly and distinctly, without terms and conditions, to be performed by us; and without offers and renders of grace. Otherwise we blend law and gospel, grace and works, Christ and Moses; and thereby involve the christian doctrine in the greatest inconsistencies and absurdities. It were to be wished that ministers would be consistent with themselves,

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(p.) Jude iii.

as also with the gospel; and not one while preach that salvation is of grace; and then, introduce such terms, offers and conditions, as would lead us to believe that it is *not of faith, but as it were by the works of the law* (q.) This is not to preach the gospel. Surely such *workmen have need to be ashamed, for they do not rightly divide the word of truth* (r.) And *if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle* (s.)

2. Another branch of the ministers work is to administer gospel ordinances---baptism and the Lord's supper. The former is pointed out in the commission, and annexed to preaching the gospel. The latter was instituted by Christ on the evening before his passion; and both are to continue until Christ's second coming. The wonderful beneficence of Christ, in these institutions, appears from their nature, end and design. Baptism is symbolical of our fellowship with Christ, in his death, burial and resurrection---of the remission of our sins; and of our resurrection from the death of sin to a new and holy life (t). The Lord's supper is emblematical of the sufferings and death of Christ---of his body broken and blood shed, to procure for us peace, pardon, righteousness; and all the blessings of the new covenant

(q) Rom. ix. 32. (r) 2 Tim. ii. 15. (s) 1 Cor. xiv. 8. (t) Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5. Acts xxii. 15.

nant (u). In the administration of these sacred ordinances, ministers are to adhere strictly to the pattern exhibited in the word of God. They are to baptize none but upon a credible profession of faith and repentance (w). Neither are they to deviate from the primitive mode of baptizing, by an immersion in water, in the name of the Father, Son and holy Ghost (x). They are to administer the Lord's supper to none but baptized believers, regularly admitted into a gospel church, and of good standing therein; for this is a church ordinance, and none but church members, ecclesiastically convened have a right to communicate at the Lord's table (y). The elements to be made use of in this institution, are bread and wine. The minister is to take the bread, and after giving thanks, break, and by the hands of the deacons distribute it to the communicants. In like manner he is also to take the cup, which, as the bread, is to be conveyed to the members; and all are to drink of it. The whole should be done with an affectionate remembrance of the agonizing Jesus (z). And surely a minister ought not to be al-

B 3. together

(u) 1 Cor. xi. 23, 26. (w) Mark xvi. 16. Acts viii. 37. ch. ii. 38. (x) Mat. xxviii. 19. Mark i. 5, 9, 10. Acts viii. 38, 39. (y) Acts ii. 41, 42. (z) Mat. xxvi. 26, 27, 28. 1 Cor. xi. 23, 26.

together silent during the solemnization of this ordinance; rather, by warm and pathetic discourse, suited to the nature and design of the institution, he should endeavour to raise the faith and affections of the communicants to a crucified Saviour.

3. Ruling, or governing the church, is another branch of the ministers work. And which they are to do, not with force and cruelty; as lording it over God's heritage--not in an arbitrary and despotic manner, as though their wills were to give law; but according to the laws and institutions of Christ; which they are to explain, enforce, and see that they are put in execution. The executive part of government is placed in their hands: for although the power of government, in general, and especially the right of judging who shall be received into, or ejected from the fellowship of the church lies in the breast of the fraternity (a), yet these powers are to be executed by their elders or pastors. In virtue of their office, they are to preside in church meetings---regulate debates---keep order---sum up the evidence and take the sense of the members, in all cases. Yet in no case is a minister entitled to more than a single vote. To rule well is, perhaps the most difficult part of the ministerial office. Cases may some-
times

(a) 2 Thel. iii. 6,

times come under consideration, so intricate and perplexed, as to require the wisdom of a Solomon properly to discuss. And the circumstances, tempers and conduct of some members may be such, as to require more prudence, patience, fortitude, fidelity and meekness than ever dwelt in the breast of one man. "Who is sufficient for these things?"

4. Another branch of the ministers work, is visiting the sick. Praying with and for them, that they may be healed. This duty is clearly pointed out by the apostle James, ch. v. 14, 15. *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oyl in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.* Hence it is plain, that when a sick brother, as here directed, sends for the minister, he ought to go and pray over him. And although anointing with oyl, as a religious or ministerial rite, became useless, when the extraordinary "gifts of healing" (b) ceased, yet prayer, being of a moral nature, is of perpetual obligation. "And the prayer of faith" will ever be efficacious. Yes! *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

(b) 1 Cor. xii. 9, 28, 29.

much (c). Therefore ministers ought not to neglect this duty of visiting and praying for the sick.

5. Comforting the saints is also a branch of the ministers work ; and no inconsiderable one. Those words of the Almighty should always lie with weight on their minds, *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God (d).* Many are the afflictions of the righteous (e). Their trials; temptations and difficulties are so numerous and weighty, that they often *mourn fore like doves. (f).* Their grief is heavier than the sand of the sea---The arrows of the Almighty are within them, the poison whereof drinketh up their spirits (g). Now ministers should be "Barnabases," sons of consolation to such. They should pray that *the Lord God would give them the tongue of the learned, that they may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary (h).* In a word, the same mind should be in all the ministers of the gospel which was in the apostle Paul ; who, on behalf of himself, and fellow-laborers, expressed himself thus, *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort*

(c) James v. 16. (d) Isa. xl. 1. (e) Psal. xxxiv. 19. (f) Isa. lix. 11. (g) Job vi. 2, 3, 4. (h) Isa. l. 4.

comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God (i).

6. Reproving vice, is a branch of the ministerial office. However irksome and disagreeable this service may be, ministers are obliged to attend to it. They must *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (k)*. This is a difficult, as well as a disagreeable part of their work. To do it aright, will require all their wisdom, prudence and caution. For although *he that hateth reproof is brutish (l)*, yet few there are so prudent as to regard it, or receive it kindly. It often happens that *he that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame, and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot (m)*.

The grand design of giving reproof, should always be the recovery, and reformation of the offender. To effect which, reproofs should generally be given in the most tender and affectionate manner, so as to convince the delinquent of a real concern for his welfare. Angry, clamorous rebukes will irritate, but seldom reform. Yet the reprover must be faithful, and shew that he is in earnest. He ought plainly to point out the malignity of sin, with his aggravating circumstances and dire consequences. *Cry aloud,*

(i) 2 Cor. i. 3, 4. (k) Eph. v. 11. (l) Prov. xii. 1. (m) Prov. ix. 7.

aloud, saith the Lord to Isaiah, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins (m). Moreover, reproofs ought to be administered impartially, not sparing the rich and great, any more than the poor and mean. Thus John the baptist *reproved Herod the tetrarch for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done (n).* In fine, reproofs are to be general or particular, public or private, as the nature of the case may call for; but pointed rebukes in public preaching seldom have any good effect. In some cases a reproof is best given by silence, a frown, or withdrawing from company: "But wisdom "is profitable to direct" (o).

7. The last branch of the minister's work which I shall mention, is refuting of errors and heresies. As magistrates are guardians of law, so ministers are *set for the defence of the gospel (p).* They should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (q), striving together for the faith of the gospel (r). The church in all ages has been infested with grievous wolves, not sparing the flock---speaking perversethings to draw away disciples after them (s). The apostle

(m) Isa. lviii. 1. (n) Luke iii. 19. (o) Eccl. x. 10. (p) Phil. i. 17. (q) Jude iii. 9. (r) Phil. i. 27. (s) Acts xx. 29, 30.

apostle Peter speaks of *false teachers, who bring in damnable heresies* (t). Such there were in the apostolic age, and such there will be to the end of the world. Now, who so fit to make head against such invaders of truth as gospel ministers? who, like *James, Cephas and John, ought to be pillars in the church* (u). Shall they sit down with folded hands while the enemy is making inroads in the church? Shall they tamely stand by---look on and see the foundations of religion sapped? Can they bear that the spouse of Christ should be poisoned with *damnable heresies and doctrines of devils*, and make no attempt to prevent the infection? God forbid, that any of the Lord's servants should be so unfaithful! Rather let them labor to build up the church of Christ by preaching, praying, disputing and writing for the defence of the gospel. Yes! and if called to it---rather seal the truth with their blood.

Thus have we endeavoured to delineate the office of gospel ministers; and shall proceed to consider the business of deacons; who also have their work in the house of God. They may be considered as "*helps*" to the ministers; being originally delegated by them to take charge of the secular concerns

(t) 2 Pet. ii. 1. (u) Gal. ii. 9.

cerns of the church. And their office is,
TO SERVE TABLES (w).

1. The Lord's table. For which they are to provide the elements---bread and wine; which, being blessed by the minister, or after he hath given thanks, they are to receive at his hands, and distribute to the communicants; from whom they are to collect for the poor. And I should think, it belongs to their office to take notice of such members as abstain from communion--admonish them, and without a reformation, to lay their case before the church.

2. The minister's table is likewise the deacons charge. They ought to see that the minister hath a sufficiency for the comfortable subsistence of himself and family. Paul besought the brethren, in general, to know them which laboured among them and were over them in the Lord, and admonished them (x). Deacons, more especially, should know their ministers---enquire into their circumstances---find out their wants, and have them supplied. It must sensibly affect the feelings of a modest minister to make his wants generally known. Many have suffered in silence, rather than do this, the deacons, therefore, if needful, should do it for him, and stir up the people to their duty of communicating to his support.

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(w) Acts vi. 2. (x) 1 Thes. v. 12.

3. The poor's table is also under the deacons care. On their account more especially was this office instituted (x.) There are generally some poor in the church, who without assistance must suffer. Now it is the deacons work to find out such, and prudently relieve them out of the churches' stock, with chearfulness, impartiality and tenderness. Not upbraiding them with their poverty; which would be cruel. To an ingenuous mind, it is mortification enough to be reduced to the necessity of receiving such supplies, however generously and delicately bestowed. But there may be some poor who have rich friends in the church; if so, they are to relieve them. Others may be poor through indolence, or extravagance; such the deacons should admonish, rather than supply.

4. The churches' table, if it may be so termed, should, I think, be under the care of the deacons. And this will involve in the deacons office, the business of receiving and paying away all donations and contributions, which respect the church; as also the care of building and repairing church edifices, together with all other outward concerns of the church. An excellent commentator, speaking of the office of deacons, expresses himself thus: "These must take care of the

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" churches'

(x) A&S. vi. 1—6.

“ churches’ stock, must review and pay
 “ and keep accounts; *buy those things which*
 “ *they had need of against the feast*, John xiii.
 “ 29, and attend to all those things which
 “ are necessary, *in ordine ad spiritualia*, in
 “ order to spiritual exercises, *that every*
 “ *thing might be done decently, and in or-*
 “ *der*, and no person or thing neglected*.”
 And as deacons are the churches’ servants,
 it is but reasonable they should advise with,
 and be directed by her, in all matters of im-
 portance; and, at proper times, render an
 account how they have disposed of her
 property.

Thus have we laid before you the work
 of deacons. If it is great, so also is their
 encouragement. *For they that have used the*
office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves
a good degree and great boldness in the faith
which is in Christ Jesus (y). Proceed we
 now

THIRDLY, to consider the work of com-
 mon members in the christian church.

1. The general duty of love, is incumbent
 on all professors of the christian religion.
 Without love we have no claim to the
 christian character, and scarce deserve to be
 styled men. On the other hand, nothing
 assimilates us more unto God than love.
For God is love, and he that dwelleth in love
dwelleth

* Henry on Acts vi. 3. (y) 1 Tim. iii. 13.

dwelleth in God, and God in him (z). The objects on whom this grace is to act are (1) God, Deut. vi. 5. (2) Christ, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. (3) the brethren, 1 John iv. 21. yea (4) even our enemies, Mat. v. 44. *Let love be without dissimulation* (a), and *the God of love and peace shall be with you* (b).

2. Christian affection, candor and forbearance, should be exercised towards one another by all professors of religion. This the apostle enjoins (c). *Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another.* And again, *Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you* (d). Professors are prone to be too censorious and bitter against their brethren, on account of their failings. Whereas, were they properly to consider their own infirmities, and the forbearance of God towards themselves, they would the more readily make allowances for human frailties in their brethren, and often be less severe on their mistakes.

3. Brotherly admonitions and reproofs, must be considered as a part of their work. Notwithstanding we are to exercise christian forbearance, we are not tamely to see a brother sin and not reprove him. *Thou shalt*

(z) 1 John iv. 16. (a) Rom. xii. 19. (b) 2 Cor. xiii. 11. (c) Rom. xii. 10. (d) Eph. iv. 32.

shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him (e). To withhold rebuke from an offending brother, would be doing him a real injury; for *reproofs of instruction are the way of life (f).* And, as *an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear (g).* How admonitions are to be administered, and for what purpose, we learn from Gal. vi. 1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* In case of private and personal offences, that best of rules, given by our Lord Jesus Christ, Mat. xviii. 15, 16, 17, should always be attended to.

4. They should constantly attend on the word and ordinances, in their own church. The shameful negligence of too many professors, in this respect, is one grand cause of the decay of religion among us. Hereby their own souls become lean---their brethren are grieved---their ministers discouraged---seekers retarded, and sinners hardened. How careful then should all the members be to fill up their places in the house of God. *Not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is (h).*

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(e) Lev. xix. 7. (f) Prov. vi. 23. (g) Prov. xxv. 12. (h) Heb. x. 25.

We may indeed justly call in question the existence of grace in those who habitually neglect the word and ordinances. Every true believer must, from principle, join with the psalmist, and say, *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! (i)*

5. Every member should conscientiously attend to the important business of maintaining good order and discipline in the church. Without good discipline, a church is like a city without walls---an easy conquest to an enemy. Yet, I apprehend, churches in general are too remiss in this duty. Some members have so little sense of the importance of discipline, that they seldom attend church-meetings for business; for which neglect they surely ought to be disciplined. Some lay the whole burthen on the minister; whereas every member should bear a part. It is true, the minister should take the lead; but this he cannot do, unless backed by the brethren. Let every member therefore apply diligently to this work, as the most likely method to maintain beauty, order and harmony in the church.

6. They should chearfully contribute towards defraying the expences of the church, *God loveth a chearful giver (k)*. No church can long exist without some charges: These should be borne in an equal proportion by

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every

(i) Psal. lxxxiv. 1. (k) 2 Cor. ix. 7.

every member according to his ability. Justice calls for this; for it is not just or reasonable that some should be burthened to ease others. Yet some men must be dragged into the service if they come at all. It is mortifying enough to see how "grudgingly" they part with a small pittance for the offerings of God, although all they have is from him, and of his own they give him (l). And were they to give liberally, with a willing mind, they would be no losers by it; for what is thus lent to the Lord he will repay with ample interest. Narrow spirited christians would do well often to read and seriously consider 2 Cor. ix. 6. *He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.*

7. They should retain a proper regard for and pay all due respect to their ministers;---*Esteem them very highly in love for their works sake* (m). Unless they do so, there is but little reason to hope their ministers will be of much service to them; for in proportion as a minister sinks in the esteem of his people and loses their regard, his usefulness ceases. Ministers in some instances may have been esteemed too highly---merely idolized; but the danger more commonly lies in the opposite extreme. It will

(l) 1 Chron. xxix. 14. (m) 1 Thes. v. 13.

will be granted that it lies much in the breast of ministers to maintain their own dignity by a suitable deportment. But a perfect, unexceptionable character need not be sought for among the lapsed sons of Adam; and as ministers *also are men of like passions with others* (n), all proper allowances should be made them for human frailties. Their people should cover their infirmities with the mantle of love, and not suffer their minds to be prejudiced against them.

8. They ought to provide for their ministers an honorable maintainance. This is a divine institution, a just, reasonable and necessary appointment, which I hope to evince, to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced mind. That it is an ordinance of God, a statute law of Heaven, never to be abolished, is plain from the sacred scriptures. That the priests and Levites had such provision made for them, will soon appear. We acknowledge they were not to inherit land, in equal proportion, with their brethren; but the other tribes were to give unto them, out of their inheritance, forty and eight cities to dwell in; together with their suburbs for their cattle, store houses, gardens, orchards, fields and vineyards (o). These were their parsonage or glebe lands; which they were to enjoy, free from tax, toll tribute or custom.

(n) Acts xiv. 15. (o) Numb. xxxv. 1—8.

custom (p). Moreover, they were allowed a certain part of all offerings and sacrifices for food. Likewise, the first-fruits of corn, wine, oyl and wool, were given to them. And, besides all these, they had made over to them, for their inheritance, the tithe, or tenth part of the produce of all the farms in the land of Israel; therefore the Levites, without labor, had a greater proportion than those who cultivated the land. So that, upon the whole, it may truly be said, those ancient ministers of the sanctuary, had an honorable maintainance. And ministers of the gospel have a solid claim to a like ample support; although the mode of raising it, differs as much, in some respects, as *arbitrary taxation* differs from *voluntary contribution*--the only gospel mode, as before hinted. The apostle Paul confirms the minister's right to such a living in 1 Cor. ix. 13. 14. *do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar? even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.* This passage of scripture sufficiently proves that the maintainance of gospel ministers is a divine ordinance. And it is a just institution--as appears from the words of our Lord, with
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(p) Ezra vii. 24.

respect to this subject. Luke x. 7. *For the laborer is worthy of his hire.*---It is also a reasonable service, founded on the solid basis of reason, as is plain from 1 Cor. ix. 9, 11. *Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?* Surely it is not---it is but reasonable that we should: I may add, it is a necessary appointment.---Necessary, as it is a standing law of God, never to be abrogated---necessary, with respect to ministers, as they cannot attend to the duties of their function without it, unless they are men of independent estates; and suppose they be such, it is neither just nor reasonable, that the church should receive their services for no consideration. *Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?* 1 Cor. ix. 7. Thus it appears, to a demonstration, that ministers are entitled to a living from their people; and I think reason will dictate that it should be a competent one. Such as will not only keep them from want, and the necessity of manual labor, but free them from anxious cares---enable them to be charitable and hospitable, and make some provision for their families. And if any would desire to know how far they are concerned, as individuals, in contributing to their minister's support,

support, they may read their duty clearly pointed out in Gal. vi. 6. *Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things.* Such a maintainance should people allow their ministers ; not by way of a gratuity, but as a just debt, which reason and the law of God bind them to pay.

9. It is the duty of members, in common, to pray earnestly for the prosperity of the church. Prayer hath a mighty efficacy, and should never be omitted. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (q).* They should pray that the minister may be assisted in every part of his work---the word blest---sinners converted and added---saints comforted---peace and love continued---all the members walk worthy of their profession ; and *that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ (r).*

10. They should adhere firmly to the doctrines of the gospel, and *earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (s).* *The church of the living God is the pillar and ground of truth (s).* Men of unsound principles should never be admitted or continued therein. Every member must *continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel (t).*

Thus

(q) James v. 16. (r) 1 Pet. iv. 11. (s) Jude iii.
(t) Col. i. 23.

Thus have I endeavoured faithfully and distinctly to point out the business of the several ranks and orders of men in the church of Christ. I am,

II. To shew how this work should be performed.

It is not enough that the work be done--- it should be performed in a right manner--- in the way which God requires; otherwise he will have no more respect to it, than he had to Cain and his offering. Some timid souls, sensible of this, work with dread. They tremble lest they should give a wrong touch to the ark. I shall therefore lay down some general rules, which may serve as a directory to each of the above classes of men in the performance of their duty. And

1. They should be governed, in every part of the work, by that divine and unerring rule---the holy scriptures; from which they never should deviate an hair's breadth. In all cases they should ask *counsel at the mouth of the Lord (u)*, i. e. the words of his mouth. This is a sure and tried rule which hath never failed. When the children of Israel returned from Babylon, and set about repairing the walls of Jerusalem, *every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon (w)*. In like manner the builders of

(u) Josh. ix. 14. (w) Neh. iv. 17.

of our christian temple should work with one hand, and hold a bible in the other. While they work by this rule they cannot err. But

2. They should work from a principle of love to God. This divine and heavenly principle, like the main spring of a watch, should set all the wheels of the soul in motion, and keep them going. Little can be done without it---indeed nothing to purpose. Without love to God, our best services are but splendid sins. The children of Israel were strictly enjoined to offer salt with all their meat-offerings, Lev. ii. 13. *And every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt ; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat-offering : with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.* In like manner should love to God pervade all the labors of those who are engaged in repairing the christian temple. This celestial virtue must never be lacking. If they would labor to effect, let them be careful to work under the influence of this divine principle. Again,

3. This work must be attended to, with a view to the glory of God. Not of adding any thing to his essential glory--- which is incapable of any addition or diminution; but that the glory of the divine perfections may be displayed---the grace, wisdom, mercy

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cy and goodness of God manifested, and the supreme being acknowledged, loved, praised and adored, by all rational, intelligent creatures. That God may be thus glorified, should be our aim, in all our common concerns. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God* (x). If this should be our view, in all our common actions, more especially in a work of so much importance as that of building the temple of Christ. Moreover

4. All who are engaged in this work should attend to it with courage and fortitude--- resolving to supercede all obstructions. A languid workman, like a timid soldier, is not to be depended on. How often is the injunction "be strong" repeated in our text. It was addressed, in particular, to each class of builders. *Be strong, O Zerubbabel---be strong, O Jeshua---be strong all the people of the land, saith the Lord, and work.* Courage, fortitude, or firmness of mind, is what is enjoined, with so much energy. In like manner, Moses addressed the children of Israel, when about to pass over Jordan, and enter into a war with sundry powerful nations. *Be strong,* said he, *and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them* (y). With such prowess and stability, should all orders of men at-

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(x) 1 Cor. x. 31. (y) Deut. xxxi. 6.

tend to their work, in the gospel church.
Once more

5. They should attend to this work heartily---*with all their heart and with all their soul* (z). It is not enough that they labor diligently, unless they are desirous of success. While working, they should be praying and singing---*O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity* (a). *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy places* (b). Some may labor well in common life, from pecuniary motives, without any regard to success. We have known some in the military line who have fought and bled in a cause which they reprobated in their hearts, waiting only a favorable opportunity to desert and shift sides*. Such treacherous characters, Judas like, may intermix with the Lord's servants in building the temple; but it is most likely they will prejudice the cause. However they have reason to dread that awful denunciation, Jer. xlviii. 10. *Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully.* In fine,

6. This work should be attended to with persevering constancy. The Lord will have no three months, nor three years men employed in his service. All these artificers should

(z) Josh. xxii. 5. (a) Psal. cxviii. 25.

(b) Psal. cxxiii. 7. * Instance Benedict Arnold, the traitor.

should inlist for life; and constantly persevere in the work till disabled by death. Some who have engaged in this service, have grown weary of it, and given up. Others, on account of some difficulties, have slunk away, like cowards, and deserted the cause. Many, upon finding that building the christian temple might interfere with their ease, health, interest, or reputation, have given over, and left the work to other hands. Blessed be God, all are not of this stamp. Christ hath still some faithful servants left; who adhere firmly to the work assigned them. Should we say unto such, as Jesus said unto the twelve, *Will ye also go away?* each one would answer---God forbid! *Lord to whom should we go (c). I love my Master---I love his work. Let him bore mine ear through with an awl, for I will serve him for ever.* Exod. xxi. 5, 6.

And now, having endeavoured to shew how this work of building the christian temple ought to be performed, I shall, as proposed,

III. Offer some considerations to excite professors, of all ranks, to engage with ardor in it.

If all orders of men, in the church of Christ, could appropriate the words of the Psalmist, *the zeal of thine house hath eaten*

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(c) John vi. 67, 68.

me up (d), there would be little need of this service. But when we consider the nature and importance of the work---the difficulties attending it, and how subject the best of men are to a lassitude of spirits; no argument can be too cogent---no considerations too weighty---no motives too persuasive to excite professors to accelerate the work, with ardor and assiduity. The following motives must suffice.

1. Let professors of all ranks, seriously consider, by whom they are called to engage in this service. Not by a worm, like me---not by kings or emperors---not by an angel---but by JEHOVAH, the Lord of Hosts. And can any withstand the injunctions and solicitations of the infinitely wise, powerful and gracious God? should this be the case, *the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it (e)*. *Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things (f)*. For all people will walk every one in the name of his God, then surely we ought to walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever (g.) Hear then, O ye builders of the christian temple; hear, and consider the injunction in our text, and may the words bear in your mind, the sanction---energy, and authority of a God! *Be strong,*

(d) Psal. lxxix. 9. (e) Hab. ii. xi. (f) Jer. xviii. 13. (g) Mich. iv. 5.

strong, and work, saith the LORD of hosts.
Shall I add -

2. It is a good work. This, methinks, should be a powerful reason why christians should engage in it with ardor. The goodness of a cause is momentous in all cases. It gives nerves to the reasonings of the senator --- fire to the pleadings of the barrister, and bravery to the exertions of the soldier. Now that building the christian temple is a good work, will appear if we consider it as the means of glorifying God --- promoting virtue and piety in the world, and saving souls from death. Even the Jewish temple was built for these noble and beneficent purposes; but much more doth the gospel church contribute thereto. If, therefore, the best work deserves any regard, this ought to be attended to with the greatest ardor. I go on to observe -

3. It is an honorable work. Among people of the world, this is generally a prevailing consideration. They are fond of the most reputable employments. Now what work can be so honorable as to build a house for God? -- A temple for the King of kings? Nebuchadnezzar boastingly said --- *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of my kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?* (h) These high,

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(h) Dan. iv. 30.

swelling words of vanity, ill became that prince; and the Lord instantly manifested his displeasure at them. But one of our builders might justly say, “O what grace, “ what honor is conferred upon me, a poor “ worm; that I should be employed in building a house for the honor of the divine “ majesty!” The work in itself is honorable. Those employed in it have honorable company---saints and angels; yea God himself will honor them with his presence, which will sweeten their labors, and render them successful therein. *This honor have all the saints (i).* O may this consideration excite them to greater ardency in the work! Need I remind you

4. That it is a pleasant work? True religion inspires the soul with real pleasure---it fills the heart with rapturous sensations. Practical godliness, whereby the christian temple is built up, is pleasant in all its branches, Prov. iii. 17. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* Preaching is pleasant. Praying is pleasant. Singing praises is pleasant. Communicating is pleasant. Ministering to the poor saints is pleasant. In short, every part of the christian's work is pleasant. Well then might the psalmist say, *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee.*

(i) Psal. cxlix. 9.

thee. Selah (k). Seeing then that the religious life, the work of which we are speaking, is so pleasant---*If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love---if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, let all professors think on these things (l), and fervently attend to their work.* Anxious to gain my point, permit me to say

5. It is a profitable work. Many labor for that which satisfieth not (m), and go after vain things, which cannot profit (n). Were the work, in which I am pressing christians to engage so vigorously, an-unprofitable service, my solicitude would be nauseous, affronting and inexcusable. But when it is considered, that all faithful laborers in it are graciously and amply rewarded---yea, that the work carries in itself a sufficient reward; I hope to be pardoned, though I should here exhaust the little skill I have in the art of persuasion. It may be, some impious sinner may interrogate---*What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?* (o) Should I become religious, and join with these laborers in building the christian temple, what shall I profit thereby? The apostle Paul shall be the respondent;
Godliness

(k) Psal. lxxxiv. 4. (l) Phil. ii. 1. ch. iv. 8.
 (m) Isai. lv. 2. (n) 1 Sam. xii. 21. (o) Job
 xxi. 15.

Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (p). More cannot be desired. If then, the hope of profit can have any influence on the mind, let this stimulate professors to greater assiduity in their work. I shall add but one consideration more, and that is.

6. The Lord hath graciously promised his presence with the laborers while thus engaged. And can any thing be more animating and encouraging than this? Hear what he says to the several ranks and orders of workmen---*Be strong and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts.* With you, by my gracious, quickening, strengthening and comforting presence! What can the builders desire more? JEHOVAH's Presence will enable them to combat every difficulty, surmount every obstacle, and courageously press forward through all discouragements! And what shall I say more? What more can be said?---Here, it is owned, we are brought to our *ne plus ultra*. Should this consideration fail of exciting professors of all ranks and orders to engage with ardor in building the christian temple, we have no other motive to offer---our pinions fail---we can soar no higher.

I shall

I shall now conclude with an applicatory address to the several ranks and orders of men, principally concerned in this discourse. And shall begin, as before,

1. With the civil magistrate. We revere you, Sirs, as the vicegerents of Almighty God!-- Appointed by him to punish and suppress vice, encourage and promote virtue---Will you be entreated to be faithful to him who hath appointed you, and to the trust reposed in you? So far as you execute law judiciously, and administer justice and judgment impartially, you may be deemed pillars of the state. But let none, whose office it is to maintain order and support government, be themselves the violaters of law; least they lose their authority, and become useless. Considering you as members of the christian church, I have presumed to point out your work and business therein, O be intreated to attend thereto with ardor and assiduity. Remember that your elevation to office doth not raise you above, or exempt you from laboring to build up the church of Christ. But let not a mistaken zeal hurry you into unwarrantable exertions of power for that purpose, which sometimes has been the case. May wisdom, prudence, justice and piety, be the concomitants of all your administrations. I now turn myself

2. To

2. To you my venerable fathers, and dear brethren in the ministry. Suffer me to address you in a few words. I have endeavoured, under sundry divisions, to portray your office; and show about what you should be employed in building up the temple of Christ. In which service you have a greater concern than any other class of men. Like the Levites, you are taken from among your brethren, as an offering unto God, *that you may execute the service of the Lord (q)*. Enough hath been said to shew the importance of your work. A rich furniture of mind is necessary for an honorable discharge of it: O labor for every qualification. Despise not the aid of human literature. Learning is an excellent handmaid to grace. None slight it but such as know not its value. Without some assistance therefrom, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to expound some passages of scripture. Ministers knowledge cannot be too extensive. *But covet earnestly the best gifts (r)*, the gifts and graces of the Spirit. There is a peculiar, ministerial gift--absolutely necessary. All other qualifications, whether natural, gracious or acquired being insufficient without it; I mean that gift of God which renders a man "apt to teach," or qualifies him for explaining the scriptures

(q) Num. viii. 6--14. (r) 1 Cor. xii. 31.

tures in an easy, acceptable manner, to the instruction and edification of the hearers (s). Without this gift, none need presume to preach the gospel. Pardon me, my reverend brethren, if I intreat you not to neglect the gift that is in you; but stir it up and improve it, by reading, praying, studying and preaching. May you, may I, give up ourselves wholly to these things, and continue in them, with ardor and assiduity to the end of life. My next address shall be

3. To the deacons. You, my dear brethren, should consider yourselves as "*helps*" or assistants to ministers, in the service of the church. For this purpose was your office originally appointed, as we have already observed. The whole office of ministry in the church, external and internal, spiritual and temporal, seems primarily to have been lodged in the breast of the elders, bishops or ministers. But, upon finding the burthen too great, the apostles directed that other fit persons should be appointed to take on them that part of the ministry which related to the secular concerns of the church. This was a wise and necessary institution; for hereby the elders were greatly relieved, so that they could give themselves continually "to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." While the deacons attended to the

(s) 1 Tim. iii. 2. ch. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6.

the churches temporal affairs; which if they had been left to the management of the whole body, would perhaps, have been regarded by none. Will you bear with me, while I endeavour to stir you up to a faithful discharge of your trust? I have sometimes thought, that some deacons did not really understand their office, otherwise such good men could not be so lax in attending to the duties of it. I have endeavoured to lay before you a clear, though succinct description of your work; whereby the importance of it may, in some measure appear. Happy should I feel, and happy would it be for the churches, could I prevail with all of your order, faithfully to discharge their duty. Would you desire to see your ministers set at liberty to attend to the duties of their function---to see the Lord's table decently and regularly attended---the wants of the poor supplied---your houses for worship neat and decent, and all the secular affairs of your churches moving on, with order and decorum? O, be intreated, for Christ's sake, ardently to attend to every branch of your office. But my concern with officers must not prevent an address

4. To the common members. No, my beloved brethren, you are of too much importance to be thus slighted. Without your aid, building the temple of Christ will go on but

but slow. What could Zerubbabel the prince, and Joshua the priest have done towards building the Jewish temple, without the assistance of the people of the land? nothing to purpose! Neither can officers build up the church of Christ, without the help of common members. Everyone has something to do. Let all be strong and work. Some perhaps, for want of knowing better, throw the whole burthen on ministers and deacons. This is rather cruel. Others, over diffident of themselves, think they can do nothing. This is a grand mistake. None so weak, but they may place a pin in the building. Weak as they may be, would all join together as they ought, much might be done. Should any show by their conduct, that they care not whether the temple of Christ is built or not, this is lamentable indeed. Such professors deserve to be cashier'd. What work private members have to do, I have endeavoured to show. If you love Christ, and would wish to see his interest flourish, O be intreated, one and all, to attend thereto, with ardency and perseverance. Shall I presume

5. And lastly, to address you, my much esteemed brethren, the members of this association? With reverence I applaud your institution. And retain a high veneration for your incorporate body. It is ancient--- it is honourable---it is useful---I felicitate

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myself

myself on being one of its humble members. You must be deemed a respectable body, as you are composed of, and represent the churches of Jesus Christ. I have it not in contemplation to point out your power and duty; and trust you stand in no need of such service. You are so happy as to know how to maintain your dignity and usefulness, without invading the rights of your constituents. You assume no higher title than that of an ADVISORY COUNCIL. Which best coincides with the constitution of the churches you have the honor to represent; which being founded on the gospel plan, is free and independent. You, therefore, impose not your sentiments on the churches; under pain of excommunication. But in all your deliberations you aim at their peace, comfort, joy and edification. With these benevolent views, I trust, you are now convened; and hope you will take time to deliberate on every point, that may properly come before you, and determine not to think of breaking up, until the whole of your business is completely finished. May brotherly love pervade your counsels, and truth be the signature of all your determinations. And may a divine ardor fire every breast, while you are laboring to glorify God, by repairing the christian temple.

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